

W r e s t l i n g

P e r s p e c t i v e

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Three Glorious... Well, Three Years

With this issue, Wrestling Perspective marks its third anniversary. When we started this publication in 1990, we were long-time wrestling fans who wanted to share our views on this unique business. Since then, we believe some of the most important probing articles written about wrestling have appeared in this publication. At the same time, we have been able to bring you in-depth interviews with some of the most interesting people in wrestling. It's been an interesting three years. Three years of which we are very proud.

For us, September, 19, 1989 is really where it all started. After not seeing each other for four months, we finally got together to go to an NWA card at the New York State Fairgrounds in Syracuse, NY. About a month before the card, Paul discovered the Wrestling Observer Newsletter and Matwatch. Eager to share the wealth, Paul showed David a copy of Matwatch, and later a copy of the Observer. These publications had the same effect on both of us: captivation. Not surprisingly, we both became long-term subscribers to these publications. After the card, which featured Ric Flair vs. Terry Funk, Sting vs. the Great Muta, and the Freebirds vs. The Midnight Express, we waited to meet the wrestlers. We had the pleasure of watching our good friend Ian get an autograph from his lifetime idol, Ole Anderson. We saw Lex Luger, a total heel at this point, ignore everyone except a handicapped fan who asked for his autograph. We shook hands with Stan Lane and Tommy Young. We were ignored by heels Michael Hayes and Jimmy Garvin and watched Norman the Lunatic drive off with Terry Funk in a Pontiac Le Mans. Ric Flair, when asked for a kiss from a female fan who perhaps was not the most attractive of women, responded with the classic line "Not enough time for that honey." Of course we were disappointed that Dr. Death Steve Williams failed to meet us out side after we challenged him during his battle with Syracuse babyface for a night, Mike Rotunda. The memories of that night are plentiful and will be remembered until we both develop that gray around the temples and have several grandchildren to lie to. Since that night, we have been fortunate to interview four of the performers on the card: Tommy Young (who has become a good friend), Stan Lane, Jimmy Garvin and Bobby Eaton (who will be featured in next month's issue). They have been gracious enough to lend us their time and we are appreciative of their support. We also spoke briefly with Jim Cornette that night, who has also been supportive of our efforts.

Unbeknownst to us, that night we started the journey that led to this publication. Less than five months after the NWA card, the first issue of Wrestling Perspective was released. The issue included articles on juicing, steroids, and the failure of the NWA to get on the Arsenio Hall Show. In the past three years, we've covered much ground, and come a long way.

We'd like to thank the newsletter editors who have supported us during the last three years. The fact that fellow editors give plugs to potential competitors is something that has always made people in the newsletter community seem more like friends and family, than competitive rivals. We'd also like to thank the people in the wrestling industry who have been kind to us and who have given us their time to be interviewed. Words of praise must go to our current staff of regular writers, the Phantom, Rodney Leighton and Michael McGowen who are among the best in the business and the writers who have appeared over the past few years: Vic Stanley (a tremendous talent who helped build this newsletter's reputation), Tim Whitehead, Dean Knickerboker, Patrick Jones, Nanette McCormick and Jeff Rubin. Finally, and most importantly, we'd like to thank you, our subscribers, for being interested in Wrestling Perspective and for being supportive of our efforts. Without you, this publication would never have survived and for that we will always be grateful. With that in mind, it is with no small amount of loyalty that we promise you years of reading to come. Now it is time for our year end awards for 12 categories we believe are important to wrestling.

Wrestler of the Year

David - Ric Flair. Without a doubt, Flair is the most consistently excellent performer in wrestling. Flair may have slowed down slightly with age, but he is still, by far, the best wrestler today. He proved his merit in 1992 in several outstanding matches with Randy Savage and Bret Hart as well as his amazing performance at last year's Royal Rumble. Finishing second was Bret Hart, who took his fame up several notches last year. Sting finished third as he showed flashes of brilliance again and a great deal of maturity.

Paul - Ric Flair. In 1992 there wasn't another choice. Even though this wasn't Flair's best year, he still gave a clinic in ring psychology, work rate and ethics. At a time when a promotion needed him, Flair reestablished his reputation as a team player and had the top drawing feud of 1992 teamed with Sid Justice against Roddy Piper and Hulk Hogan. Shawn Michaels comes in second with a major attitude. Despite his talent, as a Rocker, he was perceived as a whipping boy. Along with Sherri Martel, he worked a heel turn that gave him credibility and drawing power; let alone a solid work rate that never diminished. Ricky Steamboat rounds out number three with another year of convincing performances, solid work, and most of all, integrity.

Bill - Erik Watts. Where else are you going to find a wrestler with a 4.7 GPA who started for Oklahoma, Texas and Miami all in the same season. Deion Sanders has nothing over this kid.

Tag Team of the Year

David - Dustin Rhodes and Barry Windham. Certainly not even close to being a great tag team, but they were a notch above the rest of the pack. Ted DiBiase and IRS finished second. Again nothing flashy, but very consistent. The Steiners finished third even though they only worked half a year, they were consistently solid.

Paul - Bobby Eaton and Anderson. While I never felt they really clicked like the Midnight Express or Anderson and Tully Blanchard did, they provided solid matches every night they were paired together. Isn't that what it's all about? Money Incorporated gets the second spot. They don't have anything that outstanding other than carry non-talents like Earthquake, Typhoon, and the Nasty Boys to watchable matches. Perhaps they're better than we think? The Steiners get third. While they may deserve the top spot, their abuse of jobbers denies them the top spot based on class alone.

Bill - Team anybody up with Erik Watts and they're a tag team of the year.

Most Improved Wrestler of the Year

David - Virgil. In 1991, Virgil was terrible, among the five worst in the country. Now he is only bad; certainly significant improvement. Shawn Michaels gets second, as he came into his own last year and already among wrestling's elite. Third goes to Van Hammer. He had several good matches with Cactus Jack and is slowly learning his way around the ring.

Paul - Diamond Dallas Page. When he was thrown in the ring, he was pretty pathetic, but he has made a conscious effort to learn his craft and shows potential. Should he become a solid worker, he has the charisma to push him ahead of the proverbial pack. Steve Austin and Dustin Rhodes are tied at second as they continued their ascent towards becoming franchise players and are two tremendous talents. In third is Shane Douglas who became quite good while nobody was looking.

Bill - From a rookie wet behind the ears to clean victories over Bobby Eaton and Arn Anderson, Erik Watts gets the nod from me.

Most Deteriorated Wrestler of the Year

David - Repo Man. It's hard to believe how far Barry Darsow has plummeted. Once a fine worker, he does absolutely nothing in the ring. The once promising career of Owen Hart, who finished second, has taken a sad turn. A formerly great worker has been reduced to being one half of a job tag team and gets beat up by the likes of Razor Ramon. Finishing third is Hercules, who was already pretty bad before 1992.

Paul - Repo Man. He must have repossessed his talent. In second comes Skinner. It's always sad to see a once talented wrestler end a career like this. If you really want to know what Steve Keirn could do, watch some tapes of the Fabulous Ones and Keirn's solo work in Georgia and Florida. Third place goes to Owen Hart, whose potential is even becoming suspect as he continues to personify the Titan lifestyle.

Bill - Put anybody in the ring with Erik Watts and they're going to deteriorate fast. However, I've got to give this award to Paul E. Dangerously who was the premiere manager in the game, heading the Dangerous Alliance, but got his butt whipped by a woman and was out of a job by the end of 1992.

Most Underrated Wrestler of the Year

David - Brian Pillman. Pillman is a guy a promotion could be built around. Instead, he's a mid-level wrestler. Bobby Eaton, who finished second is sadly getting labeled underrated. He is among the five best workers in the country yet he had to do countless jobs for lesser talented wrestlers. I'm almost thankful Terry Taylor, who finished third, had his work schedule reduced. It's upsetting to watch such a talented athlete reduced to what happened to him last year.

Paul - Brad Armstrong. This is really the Brad Armstrong award. The man can work, but is rarely given the opportunity to show his talents. The only time he was part of a major feud last year was when he was injured, and thus unable to shine. In second comes Bobby Eaton, who I have said before in these pages should be a World Champion. However, it goes back to the ignorance of his bosses, and has nothing to do with his talent. Brian Pillman gets third. Pop in a tape of his match with Jushin Liger at SuperBrawl and you have my argument in abstract form.

Bill - Erik Watts hasn't gotten the respect or push he deserves.

Most Overrated Wrestler of the Year

David - Big Van Vader. Am I missing something? For the second year, Vader wins this award. He won't sell and does the same moves. Second is Masa Chono. I thought he was supposed to be great, yet he does poorly in almost every match he is in. Third is Erik Watts simply because he deserved Eaton's or Taylor's push and not the one he got.

Paul - Big Van Vader. Two words: he's boring. In second comes Masa Chono, whose push in Japan is based more on his past relationship with Lou Thesz than his actual talent. Further his matches in the states were worse than Vader's. Erik Watts may be a good person, but his father pushed well beyond the bounds of good sense.

Bill - If Jushin Liger is so great, why did he look like such a joke at Starrcade?

Best Interview of the Year

David - Paul E. Dangerously. No one got an angle over better in 1992 than Dangerously. Arn Anderson finished second. Not only is he eloquent, but every interview he does has a point. I did not see enough of Jim Cornette to place him any higher than third, but that's a tremendous compliment because I've seen so little of him, yet what I did see view was top notch.

Paul - Jim Cornette. When I saw his first Smoky Mountain interview, it was a step above anybody else in the business. Every thing he has done since has been a step above that. Bobby Heenan gets second as only he could pull off the Curt Hennig turn. Paul E. Dangerously gets third, even if it set back relations between the sexes back 100 years with his feud against Madusa.

Bill - Erik Watts was able to give an interview while using a shoehorn, how can you top that?

Match of the Year

David - Royal Rumble. Ric Flair put on a clinic and deserves to win performance of the year for his one-hour plus wrestling lessons. The excitement of this match live was indescribable. Jushin Liger vs. Brian Pillman at SuperBrawl captured second place. The pair did almost every hot move imaginable during that bout. The wild Sting vs. Cactus Jack match in June rounds out the top three.

Paul - Royal Rumble. I'm probably picking this because I was there live, but the excitement every time it looked like Flair was going to go over and the intriguing and nostalgic matchups with seven World Champions in the ring just made it a wonderful afternoon. Brian Pillman vs. Jushin Liger at SuperBrawl was the epitome of what can be done with the light-heavyweight division and gets second place. I lost count of how many times I yelled "Holy 'you know what.'" Ricky Steamboat vs. Rick Rude at Beach Blast gets number three. The match was intriguing, the work was great and I really understood why people complained.

Bill - Erik Watts makes Bobby Eaton submit to the STF. No other match had that much excitement for me.

Announcer of the Year

David - Jim Ross. Ross had a very strong year, while Tony Schiavone, who finished second, slipped in 1992. Bob Caudle, who personifies the word consistent places third.

Paul - Tony Schiavone. Never thrown off guard, rarely resorting to using hyperbole, and able to get through a boring match, Schiavone is a consummate professional. Bob Caudle gets second place as Smoky Mountain was the perfect forum for his talents. Third place goes to Vince McMahon who has long been underrated as an announcer even though his play-by-play is among the best. As a side note, I did not choose Akira Fukizawa for this reason: I do not speak Japanese. Further anyone who does not speak fluent Japanese and chooses Fukizawa is merely fooling themselves in an attempt to look pretentious. No matter how good some may think Fukizawa may be based on his pacing and inflections, until someone can show me they have successfully completed the Verbal Dynamics course in Japanese, I can only conclude people who choose Fukizawa know not of what they speak. The same can be said of those who vote for Dr. Alphonso Morales and do not speak Spanish. *Eso si que es.*

Bill - After being away from the microphone for five years, Bill Watts came in and showed everyone how it should be done.

Rookie of the Year

David - Too Cold Scorpio. Whenever I watch his television matches, I always flashback to the Great Muta's squashes in 1989. Scorpio has promise and hopefully he will be given a chance to shine in the future. Dallas Page, who finished second is still pretty raw, but at least he can be entertaining on interviews. Third goes to Erik Watts, who is truly awful, but the pickings were extremely thin this category.

Paul - Too Cold Scorpio. He may only know a few hot moves and that's it, but that's more than his competition. Dallas Page gets second as he has improved, and shows a lot of potential. Erik Watts picks up third as his tremendous push overshadowed the fact that he has some potential and could become a decent worker.

Bill - Erik Watts. He's a good kid.

Manager of the Year

David - Paul E. Dangerously. He was the mouthpiece for the most successful wrestling unit in the business. Always entertaining and interesting, Dangerously gave 100 percent behind the mic and at ringside. Jim Cornette finished second and showed the wrestling world in 1992 why he is one of the all-time greats. Curt Hennig, who finished third, was put in an unfamiliar role and shined.

Paul - Paul E. Dangerously. One of the few people left in the business who can actually draw heat, his success in 1992, much like Jim Cornette's success in 1990, was only hampered by inept management. Jim Cornette gets second place with strong great interviews, outfits and the old golden tennis racket pop. In third place is Ron Wright whose gimmick is great and really has a nasty persona.

Bill - Erik Watts. Look at the way he has managed his career.

Most Awe Inspiring Wrestler of the Year

David - Jushin Liger. His ring work is years ahead of its time. He is a trendsetter who is able to do death defying moves as well as work a great match. Second goes to Ric Flair, who still can do it all in the ring. Rounding out the top three was Brian Pillman. In 1992, Pillman consistently worked in the best match on every WCW pay-per-view.

Paul - Jushin Liger. Watch a Liger match. Note that he is fluid, fast, agile and technically gifted. Also note all the things he does that defies imagination and description, even though you've seen him do it for years. Ric Flair gets second. Nobody in the US puts on a better show night after night. If that doesn't inspire awe, then change your hobby. In fact, given Bret Hart's recent comments, he should change his profession. Ricky Steamboat gets number three for class, attitude, and more importantly, work that is almost as consistent as Flair's.

Bill - Over 50 years old and I can still kick the tail of anybody in the WCW locker room. Of course I award this award to me.

In Perspective: Nickla "Baby Doll" Roberts

Along with Sunshine and Precious, Baby Doll wrote the book on being a wrestling valet. In this interview with David Skolnick, Baby Doll discusses her career including working with Gino Hernandez, Tully Blanchard, Dusty Rhodes and Ric Flair as well as why her marriage to Sam Houston led to her departure from the NWA and her new occupation: a clothes designer for many top wrestlers.

Wrestling Perspective: Both your parents were wrestlers. Is that how you broke in?

Baby Doll: Well, kinda. It helped me be at the right place at the right time because my dad promoted wrestling here in Lubbock, (Texas), where I grew up. I met a bunch of the guys. At the time when I first started working with Gino, I knew they were kinda looking for a girl in Dallas. I called them up unbeknownst to my dad. "What about me? I'm kinda smart." But I wasn't at the time. That was the funny part about it was I wasn't. I knew Tully too. I've since looked back through some books recently and I noticed that Dusty worked here back in '68, '69. I hadn't even remembered it because I was so small. I knew Dusty and Tully. When I saw them down in '85; we were down in Tampa and Miami on Christmas Day and the day after. That was it. Being at the right place at the right time and knowing people.

WP: Did you first break in as a wrestler?

BD: No. They had Sunshine in Dallas and she left. She was having some personal problems and they had another girl who was supposed to be her aunt, Stella Mae. They brought a girl in to try and work with her. They were going to bring me in to phase the gimmick out and then Sunshine came back and they were going to use her. So I had like a week's notice, two week's notice. Here I just brought a car and I was kinda like, "oh, my gosh. What am I going to do?" And then I saw those guys in Tampa and Miami and I talked to Dusty and worked everything out.

WP: You started out with Gino during the hey-day of valets.

BD: I think that was the last big run that Dallas had. After I left, it didn't work much after that.

WP: What was Gino like? You hear a lot of stories about him.

BD: Like what kind of stories?

WP: He was a wild guy.

BD: Around me he wasn't. I had a crush on Gino since I was like 17, 18, I guess. At the time, he was 28 and he was engaged to a girl who was a senior in high school. She had this enormous diamond and drove around in this red 300ZX and her dad supposedly had a lot of money. He was pretty well preoccupied with her and kept pretty close track of her constantly. On the road, I kinda did my thing and he kinda did his thing. That was it. I'm sure he was wild. He got wilder after I left. It seems as though he really started going downhill after that.

WP: But good memories of him?

BD: Oh yeah. Very good memories. I guess because of the respect for my father and the respect for me because I was more like a sister to the boys than anything else. He respected me for that because I never messed around with any of them. Just a lot of respect there I guess.

WP: Toward the end in Texas, you also worked with Chris Adams and Jake Roberts.

BD: In fact, Jake and I got along better out of all that group than anyone else. It worked out real well. Jake and I did a little bit of stuff. But then Jake left and started working with Mid-South. So that kind of broke that up. But Jake and I made a better pair out of that whole group. We seemed to get along better. In fact, we started traveling around together. When I was leaving, when I got a job with Charlotte and Crockett and I went in, Jake told me, "Hey, look up my brother. He's working down there." So I was like, "okay, what's his name?" "Sam Houston." I was like, "oh, okay." When I first met Sam when I got there because I made a point, because Jake and I got along so well, to look Sam up, I thought Sam was a real goof. I was like, "oh my gosh. What am I into?" They were so different. It's so funny because my first recollection of Sam wasn't very good.

WP: Eventually, I assume, it got better.

BD: It started getting better when we did the 30-days deal. Tully lost me to Dusty and Dusty had the two-seater Mercedes and Magnum had the 'Vette and they always traveled together. So I didn't have anyone to travel with so Dusty always put Sam up to driving me around to make the towns. That's how we kinda met was because Dusty kinda put it up together. It was funny because then when Sam and I hit it off, Dusty got really peeved. But I was like, "gosh, you were the one that put us together." It was real funny.

WP: What was it like working with him?

BD: With Dusty? He has a very good imagination for the business and if he's got people to work with, he'll draw money. A lot of people don't like him. But I don't have any quarrel with him at all because he made me a lot of money and I know I made him a lot of money. I see the things they do with Madusa and some of the other girls and I know he would have never had me do that. That worked out really well. I think he respected me a lot. In fact, he still calls me Marilyn to this day because I was kinda like his Marilyn Monroe.

WP: Was it different working with him compared to working with Tully?

BD: I don't know if you could say different. Now that I look back, I'd really like to talk to Tully. Supposedly, he wrote me when I was in Baton Rouge and I had already moved. Both of them really looked out for me. That is saying a lot, because a lot of the guys couldn't care less about the girls that they're put with gimmicks or whatever. I know that the girl they first had with Steve Austin. I forget her name.

WP: Veronica Lane was the first one.

BD: She left after three months. She had to beg for rides. She had no idea how the business works. She didn't know what hotels to stay at, nothing. But with the guys, they kinda took me under their wing and once I kinda caught on, I was making all the hotel reservations, all the airline reservations. I turned into a valet for almost three years. I was trying to get cheaper fares for everybody and work out deals and get the best hotels, the best rates and the best deals. I kinda took care of everybody. If tickets got messed up or luggage got lost, I kinda took care of it for everybody. It worked out really well. But now unless you're really inside it, you don't get treated very well.

WP: It sounds like they're not comfortable with outsiders.

BD: Well, yeah plus they really don't care. It's kinda like sometimes if you didn't make the show, then no one would call and make sure you were okay. I know that if I ever missed a show, the phone would be ringing off the hook to see if I was okay. That's why Dusty and Tully were good. Tully kinda had more of an ego but it worked well with both of us working together. It worked out real well.

WP: Also, they worked with each other so often. I assume you were quite familiar with both. What do you think of Tully's transformation to born again Christian?

BD: It's been a couple of years now. I think it's wonderful. At first, I thought, "Man, if he's just playing this because he kinda hit rock bottom and then this happened. This is just a way out and a way to save his butt and I feel kinda sorry for him." But because he stuck with it. I know that Turner gave him a heck of a deal if he came back and he turned it down and he said, "I'll never wrestle again." I think it's wonderful, I really do. Sometimes it takes that, it depends on how low can you go. My dad works with an AA program here

Tully to get down very far before he realized how bad it really was. I think it's wonderful. He's got a family. I think he had a little girl last year. I think it's the best thing. Tully is a really, really good person and I'm real happy for him. He's found someone he's really happy with and he's got a family. Nothing's better than that.

WP: Too bad he's not wrestling anymore. He was a really good worker.

BD: It's gets to that time though. Tully was 33, 34, I guess, maybe even a little bit older than that. It's kinda like with Larry Bird. Everyone's sorry to see him go, but how bad would you want to see him get? You want to leave everyone with a good taste in their mouths. I think that's what happened with him.

WP: You were with him for how long?

BD: A whole year, a solid year except for the 30-day deal in July. Then Dusty turned me in that January. I turned baby and I stayed with him for a couple of months and I turned back heel with Flair for about a month and a half. Then I got married and pissed everyone off, lost my job and everything.

WP: Why did you leave?

BD: It wasn't my decision. I didn't know that was going to happen.

WP: They were upset that you got married?

BD: Yeah. They wanted me to stay single. They wanted me to stay like a Marilyn Monroe image was how I was told about it.

WP: But very few people know about it?

BD: That's kinda what made them mad, I think. At the time, Sam and I went out for almost three months without anybody knowing about it. Then a couple of people found out about it and then it started spreading around. It kinda made everyone mad because we fooled everybody. At the time, I was checking in under aliases a lot of times because the guys were bothering me so bad sometimes at night. I was checking in under like Jamie Bond and really weird names and they couldn't find me. I would do that and leave a key at the desk for Sam and Sam would come in like an hour later and we'd meet. It didn't set real well because I guess we'd put one over on them a little bit. I know Grizz (Smith), Sam's dad, got a couple of phone calls and I'm sure if I checked with my dad, he got a couple of phone calls saying, "Don't let these two get married." But you can't run somebody's life and they were going to send Sam to Kansas City and I would have seen him once every Thursday of the month, every third Thursday he was going to have off.

WP: Didn't he end up going to Missouri for a while?

BD: Yes. That was it. They were going to send him and I got to the point where I'm not going to be married to someone and see him one day a month. "Send me to Kansas City too." That was kinda a big mistake. I went to Kansas City with him and managed Warlord and Barbarian. It was kinda bad because they weren't doing any advertising. The TV's were all screwed up. We'd go to towns and we'd pull into places and they were like, "you're Warlord and Baby Doll. God, what are you doing here?" They didn't even know that the shows were there. We'd go to the shows and they were selling the posters in the concession for like a quarter a piece. They didn't even bother putting the posters out. I said, "You even can't draw a house with Jesus Christ if nobody knows he's going to be there." It was so off. We'd get to the town and nobody knew we were going to be there. You'd go eat or go to 7-Eleven or something like that and they'd just be going nuts because they knew who you were. But they didn't know you were going to be there. It was bad. We quit and Sam started working with the UWF and Dark Journey got hurt so then I went in there and worked a couple of months with him and that worked out pretty good. But everything kinda ends. You can't have everything forever.

WP: What do you think of Bill Watts?

BD: He always treated me real well. A lot of guys have a bad taste in their mouth about him. But I worked for him for such a short time that I can't really say. I dealt more with Grizz.

WP: That couldn't have been too difficult.

BD: No, not really. When you've got your father-in-law in there, it's not so bad.

WP: People you've worked with such as Grizzly, Dusty and Watts are running World Championship Wrestling. How do you think they are doing?

BD: I like it. I've seen a big change in their TV. I used to fast forward about 90 percent of the show. I'm doing a lot of clothes for the

BD: I like it. I've seen a big change in their TV. I used to fast forward about 90 percent of the show. I'm doing a lot of clothes for the guys. I used to see how everything fit on everyone and that was about it. But now there's more of a storyline. Dusty is able to work with the guys a little bit more and get the stories going.

WP: Currently, you're designing clothes. Is it strictly for wrestlers?

BD: I do wrestlers and strippers and dancers and whoever. A lot of show stuff. The money's really good in it. I do Jake's stuff. I do some stuff for the Steiners, Larry Zbyszko, Sam (Houston), I did some stuff for Zenk, Brad Armstrong, all the stuff the Freebirds have worn in the past three years. A lot of Turner stuff. In New York, they have a couple of girls who go to the TV tapings now. When Sam was working for New York, I'd go to the TV's, meet everybody, pick up some business, go home and work for a month and go to the next TV's. Vince kinda caught on and went, "hey, there's some money to be made in this." He got his own people in there and it was funny because somebody told me that they wanted the Beverly Brothers to have all this new stuff. They said, "We can do it for x amount of money." I think it was two grand for two outfits. They were like, "we're just starting. We don't have that money." "Oh, we'll just take a little bit out of your check every week." What a scam because the outfits I would have only charged between \$300 and \$600 a piece and these were like \$1,000 a piece. I'm like, "man, what a scam." They get guys coming and going. But Vince makes money and their guys look good so it worked.

WP: Sam worked there for a while. What's your feelings about the World Wrestling Federation?

BD: It's gone back to two different organizations. Before, Turner was trying to keep up with the WWF and they were kinda going off on tangents and not making any sense. You had two organizations that were almost the same. Now since Watts and Dusty and Grizz and all them have gone back, I think Turner's going more towards the wrestling part of it and not towards show. They're building up their guys a little bit more. It's getting to be two different organizations instead of one trying to be like the another. I like it because it gives you a choice. If you want the show and the glitz and the Wembley Stadium and stuff like that, then you can watch New York. New York's got a very entertaining show I think. But it's totally different from Turner and that gives the wrestling fans two totally different views. I remember working Philadelphia and you had two totally different crowds. You had a WWF crowd and a Turner crowd. I think it's getting more towards that now.

WP: More of a kiddy and a hardcore.

BD: Exactly. You've got more merchandising in the New York part and more wrestling with the Turner part.

WP: That's always been their distinction.

BD: Yeah.

WP: Last year, you made a brief return with Global and Sam has worked there. Is there any chance for success with that organization?

BD: They seem to be doing better on their crowds, but they seem to be having a little bit of money problems. Their backers switch around and that's kinda hard. They've got a good TV time, but you have to look at the talent that's available now. They really don't have that much to choose from and if you can't afford to have guys fly in to do you TV and get a storyline built up and have them in there for a couple of months, then it's kinda hard.

WP: Sam drove in?

BD: He usually comes in from Louisiana because that's where his mom's at. He comes in sometimes from here, makes a loop. We were living down in Baton Rouge and going back and forth and that was hard. But it's exposure and you're working and that's what counts.

WP: Any plans for him to go back with Turner?

BD: I think he's trying. I think they're getting ready to do some hiring. I haven't talked to anybody to really know.

WP: Getting back to the NWA. You worked briefly with Ric Flair. What's your assessment of him?

BD: He is the best worker ever in the business. For being a 24-hour commodity, he is a 24-hour commodity. No matter where he goes, no matter who he's with, no matter what he's doing, he is a superstar in this business. Whether he's going to the gym or working out in his own gym or walking through the airport or on the plane or going to the hotel or whatever, that's him. I can't see Ric doing anything else but this. He was a real joy in the years I worked for Crockett. He and Tully got to be good buddies and I was able to travel with him a lot. It was a lot of fun. I've known Flair since I was 12, 13 years old. He still kids me because he flew in one time when he used

when there was an NWA and he was the world champion. He flew in and he had on blue pants with brown socks and black shoes. We were like the last trip, the last leg on the run. I was driving him back from the airport to the hotel and I said, "Your clothes don't match." I was like the only one whoever told him that. I was only like 15, 16 and he still kids me about that. "You're the only one whoever told me that my clothes don't match." And here he had on like \$1,000 pair of pants, and a couple hundred dollar pair of socks and the \$700 alligator shoes. It didn't matter because he didn't match.

WP: I know you said that you didn't have to deal with a lot of sexism. But being a woman in a male-dominated business had to be tough.

BD: It is if you don't know how to behave. With the guys, there's two types of girls: those the guys respected and those the guys didn't respect. I know the guys were very modest around me. It's like the reporter that wanted to go in the locker room while the guys were showering and stuff. To me, there's a place you're supposed to be and a place where you're not supposed to be. I could just imagine a male reporter going in on like a tennis locker room and talking to some of the girl tennis players. What an uproar that would create. There usually was one big dressing room and I couldn't get a separate room, I'd take my chair and face it towards the corner. How well you treat yourself is how well they're going to treat you. I know a lot of girls strip down buck naked in front of everybody, but I couldn't do it. I always got dressed and did my makeup and hair there. I guess because I treated myself with respect, they treated me with respect. It worked out really well.

WP: Do you miss it?

BD: Of course, I do. I'd go back in a heartbeat, but I've got a little girl. It was fun. I love to look back and I wouldn't trade it for anything. There's going to be hundreds of Madusas and hundreds of Sherri Martels, but I kinda look like if it wasn't for me, I don't think those girls would have a job now. I've got my own little niche. They can do what they want and have whatever angle they want, but I kinda look back and if it wasn't for me and if it wasn't for the success of everything clicking with Dusty, Magnum, Tully and myself, none of the other girls would have existed.

WP: I know you worked a program with Jim Cornette and the Midnight Express.

BD: Yeah, he took three of my teeth out. I had to get my teeth bonded. We were in Washington, D.C. on July 3, 1986 at the Bash. I was chasing him and he ran like a girl. It was awful because all these arms and legs were flying everywhere. I went to catch him and he went to see where I was and when he turned back, he turned with his left elbow and caught me right in the mouth. He chipped three of my front teeth really bad. One half of one was almost gone and a big, huge chip out of another and the bottom one, I lost almost half of that. It really looked bad. Fourth of July, we're supposed to be in Memphis so I fly back to Charlotte and get my dentist off Lake Wile. "You've got to get my teeth fixed, they look awful." I bit Sam on the neck and drew blood they were so sharp. It was awful. Fourth of July, the dentist fixes my teeth and I fly into Memphis. It turned out pretty good, but then at the end of that month is when Sam and I got married and I got them re-bonded by my good dentist in Lubbock. We got married on a Wednesday so Tuesday, Sam went to my dentist and he got his teeth fixed. I was halfway finished getting mine fixed and his grandfather died at the hotel the day before the wedding. They were going to wake him up to go to the rehearsal and get him dressed and stuff and he didn't wake up. So here I am with all this crap in my mouth and I'm told I have to go because there's been an emergency at the hotel. My teeth are half-bonded. We get there and there's nothing we can do. We go through the wedding rehearsal. His grandmother broke down at the hospital, went running down the hall hysterical with her arms waving. The whole nine yards. We lost her for a half hour. We finally found her and got her to North Carolina with Sam's uncle. This is the night of the rehearsal. The day of the wedding, I'm heading back in my brother's brand new Corvette. I'm sitting at a light in Lubbock and I look back - I'm only four blocks from the dentist - and I say, "This car's going to hit me." Sure enough, this car rear ended me, spidered the entire rear end. I had to call my brother, "I've had a wreck in your 'Vette. You better come out here." He comes out on his motorcycle. The person had insurance. Finally get to the dentist and have my teeth fixed. Everything took place after that, but it was like don't get married. It started when Cornette chipped my teeth. That one deal we did in Raleigh, a TV taping where I nailed him on top of the head, Bubba was there. Man, I nailed him for that. That was strictly 'tatter city. But it looked good. It looked real good.

WP: He was shaking his head in bewilderment.

BD: I knocked him out for a second. If you notice, he does go out for a couple of seconds. He said he saw black for a while. But if it doesn't look good, you're not going to make any money.

WP: You also got in the ring at that time. Was it your first experience?

BD: I did a little bit down there in Dallas, just a little bit. But the woman, Stella, she had a little four-year-old girl and she peed in the ring and other stupid stuff so I really couldn't do anything with her. It was awful. She kept complaining, "You're beating me up. You're

beating me up." I said, "Hey, it looks good." That was about it. I also did some stuff with Sunshine in the UWF. There aren't any girls my size, I'm almost six feet tall and range between 160 and 175 pounds and it doesn't look right. We did the four-girl deal with the UWF. That was kind of hokey, but you do what they tell you to do.

WP: Getting back to Texas, working with Fritz and the rest of the Von Erichs. Good people?

BD: Basically, really good. I threw shot discus in high school and I met Kerry and he was going through his collegiate days setting some records. I really admired Kerry and he's only three or four years older than I am. They've been put through a lot, but they brought a lot of stuff on themselves too. A lot of denial, a lot of that doesn't exist when it really does. But you can't tell someone how to raise their family. Fritz always treated my dad with a lot of respect during the promotions. I think they had a lot put on them, too much, too soon. I look at Kerry and how much he could have had and just blew it. Even like with Kevin. But you can't turn back. You can't say, "Well, it should have been this way." They had their chance.

WP: At one time, they were the top regional promotion in the country.

BD: Yeah. We drew good money, good, good, good money. A lot of people came out to see those boys. But then because of other influences, unfortunately, drugs and alcohol and not showing up, you can't do that.

WP: It seems as though with David dying and Gino dying, there was a major drug and alcohol problem there.

BD: Yeah and then you have Mike and Chris too. With David, it was unbelievable how many people went to the funeral. If that had straightened it up and those boys had kinda seen it, but there was such a cover up over it. It wasn't like this is what happened and this is what we've got to do. A lot of people went right up to Fritz's face and said, "Your boys are killing themselves. You've got to do something." "Oh, no. Not my boys." You can't do that.

WP: It's unfortunate. David was going to win the world championship.

BD: David was the star when you think about it. He was the one who had the charisma and stuff. If he was still around, I think Kerry would have taken a different route, a totally different route. But it didn't happen that way.

WP: Certainly an interesting time.

BD: It was real fun. Even working during high school with my dad, I made a lot of money. I used to do souvenir sales and stuff.

WP: What are your future plans?

BD: I'm supposed to have a baby in two weeks. It's supposed to be the night of the MTV music video awards and this is the first year that if I had a chance, I've got tickets and I could fly out there and I just can't I'm not going to be stuck out in L.A. going, "ut-oh, my water broke. What am I going to do?" Guns 'n Roses is my favorite and Aerosmith is my all-time favorite. My little girl's middle name is Tyler because of Steven Tyler. The first day I started feeling bad and this was before we knew I was pregnant, we had tickets in Charlotte, 11th row center. I was like, "I don't know if I can go? I feel so weird." Sam is like, "you're pregnant." "I can't be pregnant." "You're pregnant, I know you are." Sure enough, four days later, we tested and sure enough I was pregnant.

WP: Is it tough with Sam away?

BD: It is, but everybody's got to do their own deal. Sam's got to do his deal and I've got to do mine. You've got to do the best you can.

WP: Thank you very much.

BD: You're welcome.

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The History Of The Stereotype - Part IV

By - The Phantom Of The Ring

The advent of television changes everything for wrestling in the mid-forties, a change which is still being felt today.

The fact that television was desperate for programming forced the operators to turn to wrestling, the one sport besides boxing that could be televised inexpensively with no such thing as performers rights and commissioners to worry about. From wrestling's standpoint, it was more than happy to cooperate with the new medium. Television offered the one thing the newspapers would no longer supply: publicity. Newspapers long ago tired of being a source of free publicity to wrestling and instead was concentrating on exposing the game. Reporters not even wet behind the ears were making their bones showing readers what they already knew wrestling to be.

Television, however, was interested in none of that. Television was only interested in filler, and wrestling could supply that in abundance. To an audience that had been without wrestling for so long, it almost seemed new. This was a sport that their fathers went to see and which their grandmothers swore up and down was on the level.

There was, however, one problem. Wrestling now had to be really entertaining. Achieving this was easy: matches were sped up, new characters pushed, and the concept of the continuing television angle was created. You're all familiar with this one; after all you grew up with it. A version of it goes as follows: "Will Teddy Starr come back and defeat the dastardly Crusher Cox at the Amphitheater this Friday? Come and find out."

For the continuing angle to work properly, wrestling needed to become a soap opera. This was achieved effortlessly. As the new audience was now back in the middle classes and more homogeneous than ever before, angles were aimed at the cast majority, the apple-pie, beer-drinking, flag-waving crowd - the general sports fan. To accomplish this, angles were ripped right out of current events class. The big event which touched everyone's lives, World War II, was now over and heels from the defeated enemy were used in abundance. Germans made good heels, but the Japanese were especially suited for this line of work.

The Japanese were presented as sneaky, formidable, and, most of all, yellow. As Africans and Hispanics had never been a threat to the United States, they could hardly qualify as proper heels. American Indians were more out of the movies; when was the last time the average fan fought one?

But the Japanese, were something else altogether. Especially in California, where they were always expected to invade, and where their strong work-ethic upset many whites and blacks alike. The first Japanese heel of note was Mr. Moto, a sneaky Japanese even by wrestling standards. He was the first wrestler to institute the "time-honored" ritual of throwing salt before the match and later using the same salt on an unfortunate victim. This went over so well, even Freddie Blassie was cheered when he faced Moto. Moto's real name was Charlie Shironuhi and he was as American as the president. But, he set the standard for the Japanese heel, a tradition followed by such luminaries as Professor Tanaka, Tokyo Joe, Mr. Fuji, and Kenji Shibuya (possibly the greatest of them all).

When they ran out of Japanese-Americans, promoters imported the real thing from Japan: Giant Baba, Mr. Saito and Strong Kobayshi among others were recruited to give Americans someone to hate. The Japanese heel had to fill the following requirements: he must be sneaky; he must be a coward (his bravery must match the color of his skin); and above all, he had to be yellow. He did not necessarily have to be Japanese. Fuji and Tanaka are actually Hawaiian and were billed as such in Japan.

This made life rough on the talented Japanese wrestlers. Rikidozan only toured this country briefly and it wasn't until the seventies that America saw its first bonafide Japanese babyface in the person of Antonio Inoki. But Inoki made as much of a splash here as sumo wrestling. Actually, no Japanese babyface has been a big hit in America, and that includes Tiger Mask, for by the time he debuted, Japan bashing was in full swing.

The Japanese heel is on the downswing these days, for Japan's threat is now economic rather than military and people find it hard to even afford to come to the matches to boo their hated heels. Also, the Japanese themselves do not like the stereotyping (though that hasn't prevented them from some crude stereotyping in Japan) and did not send over their best athletes. This has more to do with the

fact that wrestling in Japan is in good health and the Japanese do not need to export their talent. However, if times for wrestling there get lean, you can be sure that racial pride notwithstanding, the pursuit of a buck, especially by those who do not have to actually do the work, will take precedence.

The German heel was more of a hit in the Midwest and East Coast, while the Japanese heel began as a West Coast phenomenon. Poles dominated wrestling fandom in the Midwest and Italians in the East, along with Jews, and these groups were victimized by the Germans in World War II. Italians never made good war heels because Italy was so ineffectual as a war power. Instead, they were to come into their own in wrestling stereotyping as organized crime figures.

The first major German heel during the post-war period was Hans Schmidt. Hans Herman had actually been around before Schmidt, but Schmidt was the first to capitalize on the military schtick. Schmidt, real name Guy LaRose (French Canadian), caused riots from Chicago to Montreal. He had a real talent for making a bad situation worse and annoying even the most torpid fan. German heels were careful to emphasize the iron cross rather than the swastika: there was no need to go too far and really offend someone.

Hans was followed by such lovable characters as Waldo and Fritz Von Erich, Fritz Von Ulm, Baron Von Raschke, and my favorite, Fritz Von Goehring (in real life Johnny Gabor, brother of "Killer" Buddy Austin), whose stockline was "Pain, I luff dishink out pain."

Waldo Von Erich was sort of a folk-hero on the East Coast and in later years, not really taken all that seriously by fans. I do remember in my high school years going to the Garden to see him wrestle Bruno Sammartino for what had to have been the umpteenth time and sitting behind a row of Orthodox Jews at ringside. They booed him unmercifully and he in turn played the game. Afterward, I saw him signing autographs for several of them and all were smiling.

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